



Bicycle Advisory Committee

Date: April 19, 2023.

Time: 7:15pm.

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation (Zoom).

Minutes

Attendance: Christopher Tonkin., Adam MacNeil., Linda Epstein., Jack Johnson., Doug Mayo-Wells., Scott Smith., Officer Shannon Hickey., Chuck Carney., Len Greenberg., Steve Revilak.

1. Greetings and introductions, ground rules for online meetings

Christopher Tonkin advises that the meeting is held remotely related to extension of COVID-19 measures adopted during the State of Emergency. Tonkin notifies attendees that Committee secretary Doug Mayo-Wells is taking minutes; the meeting is being recorded for the purposes of verifying the minutes; and the recording will be deleted after the minutes are approved. Tonkin confirms the committee members and others in attendance for the meeting.

2. Approval of the outstanding minutes for previous meetings.

Christopher Tonkin moves to approve the March minutes as amended. Motion carries, none opposed (1 abstention).

3. Update re: new Transportation Planner.

The Transportation Planner position is posted on the Town website again. Director of Planning and Community Development Ricker is currently traveling, so no formal update is available.

4. Report from COBWEB Officer Hickey.

The Arlington Police Department (APD) is resuming COBWEB (Cops on Bikes with Education for Bicyclists) after a 2-year break.

Three officers (Hickey, Koslowsky, Shah) are going through 3-day COBWEB training, and are prepared to enforce bicycle and motor vehicle laws (including new safe passing distance) as well as respond to other calls while on bikes.

APD has 2 fairly new bicycles, which have recently received maintenance.

Enforcement (red light violations, parking or driving in bike lanes) will likely be a focus, Officer Hickey has received complaints about bike lane obstruction previously.

5. TAC (Transportation Advisory Committee) Report.

Four relevant items from TAC meeting last week:

- a) Business owners from the Mass Ave/Appleton area attended to raise concerns about parking. This is a matter for the Select Board at this point.
- b) TAC was asked to do a peer review of a recently parking study. The committee noted that average use and peak use must both be represented.
- c) DPW will be replacing the decking on the wooden footbridge by Alewife station; the approach is not ADA compliant (standard is 1/4" vertical difference, these are closer to 1") and has caused injuries. The work must be completed within the current fiscal year (by June) and will likely take several weeks. Will likely cause congestion, as the alternative is a narrow sidewalk, partly in Cambridge, partly in Arlington.
- d) TAC was asked to review a housing authority application on Sunnyside Drive. TAC suggested involving Somerville, as this is relevant to efforts to improve the Broadway/Rt.16 intersection, and might impact positioning of the bus stop. Steve Revilak provided additional context from the Redevelopment Board, which recently reviewed the proposal. The land is owned by the Housing Corporation of Arlington. There are 43 units, with 23 parking spaces proposed. The board recommended more commercial space, more bike parking, and less vehicle parking. The Zoning Board of Appeals will consider the matter on May 2nd.

Action item: Christopher Tonkin to send note to Town Engineer Wayne Chouinard and DPW Director Mike Rademacher to ask that ABAC is informed of the schedule for the Alewife Bridge replacement in advance. Steve Revilak notes that we should strive to inform neighboring communities, riders in Cambridge and Lexington will also be impacted.

6. Debrief of March's meeting for Christopher Tonkin.

Not required as this was summarized in the minutes.

7. Allocation of ABAC funds.

Christopher Tonkin will meet with Jack Johnson to discuss options.

8. Lexington's Signage plans and Bedford's supports.

Lexington has been testing proposed signage. Bedford is likely to adopt at least some of Lexington's sign recommendations (although likely not the speed advisory). ABAC generally agrees that consistent signage throughout the bikeway would be beneficial.

ABAC raised concerns about several of the design proposals. The sign advocating the use of lights and reflectors actually illustrates bad practice (cyclist shining light directly in pedestrian's eyes rather than aiming downward). A sign advocates yielding specifically to people with disabilities, but cyclists should yield to all pedestrians.

15mph speed advisory. Although no vote was taken, ABAC generally agreed that even if a speed limit is not enforceable, signage creates the expectation that speed should be moderated. Arlington might consider speed advisory signs in congested areas and where there have been previous crashes or injuries, ie., near Alewife, Trader Joes, as well as near crosswalks.

The sign advocating riding single file, walking double file is counter to previous Arlington guidance, which permitted riding abreast in uncrowded areas. Questions were raised about illustrating both negative and positive examples.

The Committee felt that in some cases signage might be ambiguous or difficult to interpret and recommended resources to bolster posted signage, e.g., an informational kiosk in the Center, or a QR code linking to more detailed information.

Arlington does not currently have funding for bikeway signage, but could pursue a CPA/Wayfinding grant. Lexington may also invest in sign fabrication capability, which could reduce Arlington's costs.

9. Spring Social Event.

ABAC has reserved the downstairs room at the Jefferson-Cutter house on May 13 from 1-3pm. An agenda will be posted. ABAC will likely have a quorum, but minutes will reflect general discussion; no policy matters will be discussed.

10. Social Media presence.

Adam MacNeill reviews current state; he took over the Facebook and Twitter accounts in 2017, but has not been active on them since 2020. He notes that engagement has been low, although Facebook has gotten some messages. The committee generally agrees that the lack of social media engagement has not had a major impact.

Chuck Carney asks if we track bike accidents (as Cambridge and Somerville do); it is noted that APD does not have a mechanism for tracking and classifying crashes that do not involve motor vehicles.

11. New zoning requirements – Mass Transit zoning rules for MBTA communities.

Steve Revilak summarizes a presentation from a recent Everywhere Arlington Livable Streets (EALS) meeting. Arlington is classified as an “adjacent community” because there are no commuter rail or subway facilities in the Town. The law requires that identified communities have to provide a district of “reasonable size” where multi-family housing is allowed by right (no discretionary permitting process) without restrictions to size, age, or children. Reasonable size guidance is based on developable land in proximity to MBTA stations and the number of households in the 2020 census. For Arlington this is approximately 2,046 homes/32 acres. Restrictions that the districts must be close to stations were relaxed, so they can be anywhere in the Town. The Planning Department, Redevelopment Board and a working group conducted a survey to assess whether locating the districts on transit corridors, in commercial districts etc.

Communities are encouraged, although not required, to locate districts along bus lines, Lexington has identified districts that are on bus lines.

Action Item: Christopher Tonkin will identify someone to present to ABAC in more detail.

12. Spring Cleanup of Bikeway.

There are three clean-up activities scheduled for Sunday April 23.

- a) EALS will meet at 10 am at the intersection of Rt 16/Alewife Greenway and Mass Ave. We will cover both the Arlington and Cambridge sides of the greenway from Mass Ave to Broadway, which should take roughly 2 hours.
- b) Sunnyside Road neighbors will meet at 10 am at the north end of the greenway at the Mystic Valley Parkway and will cover the Arlington side down to Broadway.
- c) Save Alewife Brook will meet at 9:15 am at Thorndike Field and clean the greenway from the Minuteman Path up to Mass Ave (including portions of the Rt 2 embankment).

13. Spring Tour of Arlington

Ride will start in Arlington Center on May 21st, 9:30am. The route can be finalized (and road-tested) at the Spring social event.

Action Item: Christopher Tonkin and Jack Johnson will discuss route options; Jack will submit info for town email alerts etc.

14. Dates for this year's meetings.

Upcoming ABAC meetings: May 17, June 21, July 19, August 16, September 20, October 18, November 15, December 20.

On March 29, Governor Healey signed into law a supplemental budget bill which extends the temporary provisions pertaining to the Open Meeting Law (which permit remote meetings) to March 31, 2025. However the Town's guidance is not clear. ABAC feels it may be worth considering a hybrid meeting with limited technical support (some people physically present, with a laptop in the room to facilitate remote participation).

Action item: Christopher Tonkin to reserve a physical room for upcoming meetings.

15. Any other business.

The committee discussed the 2nd Charlie Proctor memorial ride, however this event has been postponed until 2024.

Select Board member Len Diggins raised correspondence from a constituent banned by their landlord from keeping their bike into the property.

The committee is aware of many incidents related to fires caused by ebike batteries, particularly involving over-charging.

Doug Mayo-Wells' anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that landlords in Cambridge do have authority to bar bicycles from being brought into a building.

The committee suggests that the landlord might be able to offer outdoor bike storage (e.g., a shed).

Steve Revilak asks if the committee advocates for more public bike parking. The committee acknowledges the challenges of locating bike parking in the heights due to narrow sidewalks. This is likely something we can work with the new transportation manager on, as well as the economic development coordinator.

Linda Epstein notes that the racks at Hurd field are insufficient for the demand.

Action item: Christopher Tonkin to reply to Len Diggins.

16. Motion to Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 8:52pm.